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Rowanduz

doors at some favored spot, such as the waterfall of Baykhal, and there is dancing accompanied by flutes and drums. It might be mentioned that on these days, as well as Jejiani Qurban, many persons, particularly the girls, stain their hands with henna, just as at a wedding.

The second observance is concerned with the curious figure of Khidir Elyas and takes place in the autumn. "The mulla has nothing to say about Khidir Elyas, nor does he tell the people when the days come. A few people do not recognize these days." Khidir Elyas (Arabic, Khidir, "the Green One," and Elyas, Elijah) is a peculiar character of folklore, the belief in whom is singularly widespread in the Middle East. He has been discussed in some detail in a large number of works treating popular religion in the Islamic world, and appears to be a synthesis of such heroes of romance as Gilgamesh, Moses, Elijah, and Alexander the Great.[1] In Upper Egypt there are supposed to be two persons who travel together, Khidir and Elyas, and in other places only the one. His salient characteristics are his power to confer blessings and his immortality, for he is believed to have drunk from the Fountain of Life. The following narrative was recorded in Rowanduz:

> Khidir Elyas is a holy man who lives forever. He walks at night and chases away evil spirits. Whoever experiences misfortune need only cry out to him for aid. One night I was bringing a load of rice to Rowanduz by mule. The mule lost his footing and fell. I shouted, "O Khidir Elyas, I have

[1] For example, Tritton, 1951, p. 49.